



# **GATORMUN XXIII**

**The Social , Cultural, & Humanitarian Council  
Background Guide**

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Sarah Mill

# The Social, Cultural, & Humanitarian Council (SOCHUM)

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# The Social, Cultural, & Humanitarian Council (SOCHUM)

## ***Letter from the Director:***

Dearest delegates,

My name is Sarah Mill, and I am so excited to be your Director for the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) at GatorMUN XXIII! I'm currently a member of the University of Florida's Model United Nations team, and during my time here, I've had the opportunity to chair three General Assembly committees.

As a Health Science major, I have a deep passion for humanitarian work, especially as it relates to equitable access to healthcare and human rights worldwide. SOCHUM, as the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, focuses on some of the most pressing global issues—including human rights, social development, the treatment of minorities and refugees, and the protection of cultural and humanitarian freedoms. I'm incredibly excited to see how each of you approaches the challenges we'll be simulating this weekend.

In this committee, we will be addressing two topics rooted in current global issues that fall under SOCHUM's real-world mandate. These topics have been selected to encourage thoughtful research, spirited debate, and innovative resolutions that reflect the core values of the United Nations. To support your preparation, a background guide is included below. It provides foundational knowledge on both topics and an overview of SOCHUM's structure and history. However, to truly excel, I strongly encourage you to conduct your own research—especially using official UN resolutions and reports—to gain a deeper understanding of your assigned country's stance.

Position papers are required for this committee. They offer a chance to explore your delegation's position and come to committee ready to debate, negotiate, and collaborate. Expectations and formatting guidelines can be found on the GatorMUN XXIII website.

A few key notes to ensure a smooth and successful committee experience:

SOCHUM will follow traditional General Assembly procedure, which will be outlined in the background guide and reviewed at the start of our first session. With many delegates in the room, it is especially important to respect your fellow participants and engage in collaborative, diplomatic dialogue. We will be debating both topics over the course of the weekend and aim to complete and vote on resolutions by the end of committee. All work must be completed during formal session—no working outside of committee hours. This gives everyone a chance to fully participate while also enjoying the rest of the conference experience. Please ask questions! Whether it's about procedure, research, or committee logistics, I'm here to help ensure that you feel confident and supported.

I can't wait to meet you all and see the ideas, leadership, and diplomacy you bring to committee. I'm confident that we'll have an engaging, collaborative, and impactful weekend together.

Warm regards,

Sarah Mill

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## ***Rules of Procedure***

### **Quorum**

A majority of voting members answering to the roll at each session shall constitute a quorum for that session. This means that half plus one of all voting members are present. Quorum will be assumed consistent unless questioned through a Point of Order. Delegates may request to be noted as "Present" or "Present and Voting."

### **Motion to Suspend the Rules for the Purpose of a Moderated Caucus**

This motion must include three specifications

- Length of the Caucus
- Speaking Time
- Reason for the Caucus

During a moderated caucus, delegates will be called on to speak by the Committee Director. Delegates will raise their placards to be recognized. Delegates must maintain the same degree of decorum throughout a Moderated Caucus as in formal debate. This motion requires a simple majority to pass.

### **Motion to Suspend the Rules for the Purpose of an Unmoderated Caucus**

This motion must include the length of the Caucus. During an unmoderated caucus, delegates may get up from their seats and talk amongst themselves. This motion requires a simple majority to pass. The length of an unmoderated caucus in a Crisis committee should not exceed fifteen minutes.

### **Motion to Suspend the Meeting**

This motion is in order if there is a scheduled break in debate to be observed. (ie. Lunch!) This motion requires a simple majority vote. The Committee Director may refuse to entertain this motion at their discretion.

### **Motion to Adjourn the Meeting**

This motion is in order at the end of the last committee session. It signifies the closing of the committee until next year's conference.

### **Points of Order**

Points of Order will only be recognized for the following items:

- To recognize errors in voting, tabulation, or procedure
- To question relevance of debate to the current Topic
- To question a quorum.

A Point of Order may interrupt a speaker if necessary and it is to be used sparingly.

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## Points of Inquiry

When there is no discussion on the floor, a delegate may direct a question to the Committee Director. Any question directed to another delegate may only be asked immediately after the delegate has finished speaking on a substantive matter. A delegate that declines to respond to a question after a formal speech forfeits any further questioning time.

## Points of Personal Privilege

Points of personal privilege are used to request information or clarification and conduct all other business of the body except Motions or Points specifically mentioned in the Rules of Procedure. Please note: The Director may refuse to recognize Points of Order, Points of Inquiry or Points of Personal Privilege if the Committee Director believes the decorum and restraint inherent in the exercise has been violated, or if the point is deemed dilatory in nature.

## Rights of Reply

At the Committee Director's discretion, any member nation or observer may be granted a Right of Reply to answer serious insults directed at the dignity of the delegate present. The Director has the ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY to accept or reject Rights of Reply, and the decision IS NOT SUBJECT TO APPEAL. Delegates who feel they are being treated unfairly may take their complaint to any member of the Secretariat.

## Directives

Directives act as a replacement for Draft Resolutions when in Crisis committees, and are the actions that the body decides to take as a whole. Directives are not required to contain operative or preambulatory clauses. A directive should contain:

- The name(s) of the author(s)
- A title
- A number of signatories/sponsors signatures' necessary to
- introduce, determined by the Director

A simple majority vote is required to introduce a directive, and multiple directives may be introduced at once. Press releases produced on behalf of the body must also be voted on as Directives.

## Friendly Amendments

Friendly Amendments are any changes to a formally introduced Directive that all Sponsors agree to in writing. The Committee Director must approve the Friendly Amendment and confirm each Sponsor's agreement both verbally and in writing.

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## Unfriendly Amendments

Unfriendly Amendments are any substantive changes to a formally introduced Directive that are not agreed to by all of the Sponsors of the Directive. In order to introduce an Unfriendly Amendment, the Unfriendly Amendment must be the number equivalent to 1/3 of Quorum confirmed signatories. The Committee Director has the authority to discern between substantive and non-substantive Unfriendly amendment proposals.

## Plagiarism

GatorMUN maintains a zero-tolerance policy in regards to plagiarism. Delegates found to have used the ideas of others without properly citing those individuals, organizations, or documents will have their credentials revoked for the duration of the GatorMUN conference. This is a very serious offense.

## Crisis Notes

A crisis note is an action taken by an individual in a Crisis committee. Crisis notes do not need to be introduced or voted on, and should be given to the Crisis Staff by sending the notes to a designated pickup point in each room. A crisis note should both be addressed to crisis and have the delegate's position on both the inside and outside of the note.

## Motion to Enter Voting Procedure

Once this motion passes, and the committee enters Voting Procedure, no occupants of the committee room may exit the Committee Room, and no individual may enter the Committee Room from the outside. A member of the Dias will secure all doors.

- No talking, passing notes, or communicating of any kind will be tolerated during voting procedures.
- Each Directive will be read to the body and voted upon in the order which they were introduced. Any Proposed Unfriendly Amendments to each Directive will be read to the body and voted upon before the main body of the Directive as a whole is put to a vote.
- Delegates who requested to be noted as "Present and Voting" are unable to abstain during voting procedure. Abstentions will not be counted in the tallying of a majority. For example, 5 yes votes, 4 no votes, and 7 abstentions means that the Directive passes.
- The Committee will adopt Directives and Unfriendly Amendments to Directives if these documents pass with a simple majority. Specialized committees should refer to their background-guides or Committee Directors for information concerning specific voting procedures.

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## Roll Call Voting

A counted placard vote will be considered sufficient unless any delegate to the committee motions for a Roll Call Vote. If a Roll Call Vote is requested, the committee must comply. All delegates must vote: "For," "Against," "Abstain," or "Pass." During a Roll Call vote, any delegate who answers, "Pass," reserves his/her vote until the Committee Director has exhausted the Roll. However, once the Committee Director returns to "Passing" Delegates, they must vote: "For" or "Against."

## Accepting by Acclamation

This motion may be stated when the Committee Director asks for points or motions. If a Roll Call Vote is requested, the motion to Accept by Acclamation is voided. If a delegate believes a Directive will pass without opposition, he or she may move to accept the Directive by acclamation. The motion passes unless a single delegate shows opposition. An abstention is not considered opposition. Should the motion fail, the committee will move directly into a Roll Call Vote.

## Tech Policy

Technology will not be allowed throughout the course of the committee. Delegates are prohibited from using their technology inside the committee room. However, they are encouraged to do research before and during assigned breaks.

## ***Topic A: Humanitarian Access in Occupied Territories***

### Introduction:

Humanitarian access, which is defined as the ability of humanitarian actors to reach populations in need without hindrance, is a cornerstone of international humanitarian law (Geneva Convention, 1949). However, in many occupied or conflict-ridden regions, such access is restricted, delayed, or weaponized for political and military gain. These denials result in devastating consequences: disrupted aid delivery, preventable deaths, and the further deterioration of human rights conditions (OHCHR, 2023; Amnesty International, 2023)). This committee will explore how SOCHUM, as the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee, can address systemic obstruction of humanitarian aid in occupied or disputed territories, while balancing the legal principle of state sovereignty with the international community's responsibility to protect civilians.

### Background Information:

Humanitarian law, outlined in the Geneva Conventions of 1949, requires all parties in conflict to permit unimpeded access for humanitarian relief. Yet, in practice, this obligation is frequently disregarded (Human Rights Watch, 2021; OHCHR, 2023). In some of the world's most protracted and complex conflicts, Myanmar, Sudan, and others, humanitarian access is routinely obstructed, denied, or even weaponized. Aid convoys are blocked at borders, international organizations are barred entry, and civilians are left without access to critical resources such as medical care, food, and shelter. In some cases, these restrictions are used deliberately as tools of war or political leverage.

The principle of humanitarian neutrality is enshrined in international humanitarian law, most notably the Geneva Conventions. However, state sovereignty and national security are often invoked by governments or de facto authorities to restrict access, citing concerns over foreign interference or support for opposition groups. Additionally, non-state actors, such as armed militias or separatist groups, often operate in areas outside formal state control, making coordination and accountability even more difficult. The challenge for the international community, and SOCHUM specifically, is to identify equitable and effective ways to secure humanitarian access without undermining the legal and political rights of sovereign states.



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Currently in the Middle East as well as other parts of the world, humanitarian access is frequently obstructed due to ongoing conflict, military blockades, and the closure of border crossings. These restrictions limit the delivery of essential supplies such as fuel and medicine, while also impeding the movement of humanitarian personnel. As a result, the living conditions for over two million civilians have deteriorated dramatically. The United Nations, including agencies like OCHA and UNRWA, has consistently called for the protection of humanitarian corridors and the lifting of access restrictions. SOCHUM has also played a role by raising awareness about human rights violations and advocating for the protection of civilians under international humanitarian law.

In Sudan, particularly in the Darfur and South Kordofan regions, both the Sudanese government and various armed groups have imposed restrictions on humanitarian organizations, often citing political or security concerns. These constraints have led to the expulsion of aid agencies and frequent denials of entry, leaving vulnerable populations without adequate support (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2025; Sudan UN, 2025). The UN has responded by deploying peacekeeping missions such as UNAMID (African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur) and has issued resolutions urging the Sudanese government to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access. SOCHUM has addressed these issues through its general debates and resolutions condemning violence against civilians and the obstruction of aid delivery.

In Myanmar, especially in Rakhine and Chin States, the situation has worsened since the 2021 military coup, with humanitarian actors facing increasing restrictions, surveillance, and blockades. These challenges are particularly severe in areas populated by ethnic minorities, including the Rohingya (Human Rights Watch, 2021; OHCHR, 2023). The UN has condemned the military's actions through various resolutions, while agencies such as UNHCR and WFP have continued to provide aid under extremely difficult conditions. SOCHUM has brought international attention to the plight of the Rohingya and other affected groups, pushing for accountability and the restoration of access for humanitarian organizations. These cases reflect broader patterns of humanitarian access being used as a tool of war, either to punish populations, manipulate foreign involvement, or limit witness access to human rights abuses.

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## Current Challenges:

Despite numerous UN resolutions affirming the need for humanitarian access, the international system struggles to respond when aid is blocked by both state and non-state actors. In many conflict zones, control of territory is divided between governments and armed groups, making humanitarian access complex and dangerous. For instance, in Syria, the Assad regime has restricted UN aid from reaching opposition-held areas, while armed groups like Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham have interfered with distribution, either to divert aid or leverage it for control. A similar challenge exists in Sudan, where the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) continue to battle over territory, with humanitarian agencies caught in the crossfire. The flow of aid has been subject to political calculations, military operations, and ongoing blockades. In past attempts to solve these issues—such as cross-border aid mechanisms authorized by the UN Security Council in Syria, progress has often been temporary or blocked by vetoes, especially from permanent members like Russia and China citing sovereignty (UN Security Council, 2019; Amnesty International, 2023). Without consistent, enforceable agreements among all parties on the ground, humanitarian corridors frequently collapse, and civilian populations continue to suffer without access to life-saving resources .

A major weakness in the international humanitarian system is the lack of binding enforcement mechanisms, particularly in General Assembly bodies such as SOCHUM. While the UN can pass resolutions and call for aid access, these directives are often ignored without any legal consequence. The UN Security Council has the authority to mandate enforcement actions, but political divisions and the use of veto power often paralyze its ability to act. For example, in the case of Myanmar's Rohingya crisis, Security Council resolutions demanding access for humanitarian actors were consistently watered down or blocked by member states with geopolitical interests (Human Rights Watch, 2021; OHCHR, 2023). Even when resolutions are passed, there is no independent enforcement body capable of compelling states or non-state actors to comply. Past efforts, such as the creation of peacekeeping missions with humanitarian mandates, have sometimes helped but remain limited by rules of engagement, host country consent, and underfunding. Delegates must consider new forms of enforcement, such as automatic consequences for aid obstruction, stronger reporting mechanisms tied to international accountability, or binding humanitarian access agreements backed by regional organizations or multilateral coalitions. Without this, resolutions continue to lack teeth, and civilians remain unprotected in protracted crises.

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Sanctions and diplomatic pressure are often the only tools available to compel compliance with humanitarian obligations but their effectiveness is inconsistent and highly dependent on global political will. For example, sanctions on Venezuela and Syria were intended to isolate regimes responsible for human rights abuses and limit their military capabilities. However, these measures have often had unintended consequences, such as restricting access to fuel, medicine, and financial systems needed for aid delivery, thereby worsening humanitarian conditions for ordinary civilians (Reuters, 2025; UN reports, 2023). Diplomatic pressure, including public condemnation and human rights reporting, can draw attention to abuses but rarely results in immediate policy change without accompanying action. In some cases, such as North Korea, extensive sanctions have done little to improve humanitarian access or resolve the underlying crisis, due to the regime's isolation and prioritization of self-preservation. Delegates should consider more targeted sanctions, such as those aimed specifically at individuals obstructing aid, or positive incentives, such as conditional economic relief or development assistance tied to humanitarian access. A more flexible and strategic use of both pressure and engagement may yield better outcomes than blanket measures that risk punishing the very populations humanitarian aid seeks to help.

## Conclusion:

The denial of humanitarian access in occupied territories poses one of the most urgent challenges to the international community today. Through this committee, delegates will confront difficult questions of sovereignty, intervention, and humanitarian ethics, and work together to craft resolutions that prioritize civilian well-being, uphold international law, and reflect the values of the United Nations (2,5,6).

## Topic A: Questions to Consider

- How can SOCHUM push for the establishment of neutral humanitarian corridors in active conflict zones?
- What role can international legal frameworks play in improving humanitarian access in occupied regions?
- What mechanisms (sanctions, embargoes, political pressure) are available when states or groups obstruct aid?
- How can non-state actors be held accountable under international law for restricting access or committing abuses?
- How do we balance state sovereignty with the responsibility to protect civilians in occupied or contested territories?

## ***Topic B: The Rights of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)***

### Introduction:

In the face of war, persecution, natural disasters, and political instability, over 110 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced, more than at any point in recorded history (UNHCR, 2024). Among them are refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), each with distinct legal classifications and challenges. Many are trapped in legal limbo, without access to healthcare, education, employment, or legal status. Others face inhumane living conditions, detention, or xenophobic policies (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2023).

The United Nations General Assembly Third Committee (SOCHUM) plays a vital role in elevating the human rights concerns of displaced populations. While the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and IOM (International Organization for Migration) manage on-the-ground operations, SOCHUM addresses the broader legal, social, and humanitarian frameworks that govern the rights of displaced persons (United Nations, 2022). This committee will explore how the international community can better protect refugees and IDPs while navigating the tension between national sovereignty and global responsibility-sharing.

### Background Information:

The core international treaty defining refugee rights is the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which outline who qualifies as a refugee and what protections they are entitled to, including non-refoulement (protection from forced return to danger), access to education and healthcare, and legal identity (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2011).

However, challenges to enforcement persist: some countries have not ratified the Convention (Global Refugee Forum, 2023). Others implement restrictive asylum laws or maintain poor conditions in camps or detention centers. For instance, some states impose arbitrary detention, limit access to legal counsel, or delay asylum procedures, effectively deterring individuals from seeking protection (Human Rights Watch, 2022). In several refugee camps, such as those in Bangladesh or parts of East Africa, overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to education and healthcare further undermine the rights and dignity of displaced people (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2023). Additionally, there is no equivalent legal framework for internally displaced persons (IDPs), who remain within their country's borders and fall under domestic jurisdiction. As a result, IDPs often lack access to international protection mechanisms and may be subject to the same political or ethnic persecution that forced their displacement in the first place (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023).

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## Refugees vs. Asylum Seekers vs. Economic Migrants vs. IDPs

Refugees are individuals who have been forced to flee their country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on factors such as race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Unlike other categories of migrants, refugees are protected under international law, primarily by the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. These legal frameworks guarantee certain rights to refugees, including the right not to be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom (UNHCR, 2011). Refugees have crossed international borders and are recognized as needing international protection due to the dangers they face in their home countries.

Asylum seekers are individuals who have fled their home country and are seeking international protection but have not yet been legally recognized as refugees. While they await a decision on their application for refugee status, asylum seekers may remain in a state of legal uncertainty. During this time, they are entitled to certain protections under international law, such as the right to have their case heard and not to be forcibly returned to their country of origin (UNHCR, 2023). The distinction between an asylum seeker and a refugee is largely procedural (IOM, 2023).

Economic migrants, on the other hand, are individuals who leave their home country primarily to seek better economic opportunities. They may move to escape poverty, unemployment, or lack of access to basic services, but their reasons for migration are not rooted in persecution or violence. Because their migration is considered voluntary and not due to immediate threats to their safety or freedom, economic migrants are not entitled to the same legal protections as refugees under international law. However, they still retain basic human rights and may be protected by labor laws and migration agreements depending on the country they enter (International Labour Organization, 2023).

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are people who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, human rights violations, or natural disasters but remain within the borders of their own country. Because they have not crossed an international border, IDPs are not classified as refugees under international law. Nevertheless, they often face similar challenges, including lack of shelter, food, healthcare, and security. Unlike refugees, the primary responsibility for IDPs' protection lies with their own government, though international agencies such as the UNHCR may provide assistance when national authorities are unable or unwilling to do so (IDMC, 2023).

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## Current Challenges:

One of the most pressing challenges facing displaced persons today is the lack of access to rights and essential services. Without recognized legal status, many refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs are unable to access critical resources such as healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and safe housing. Legal uncertainty often leaves them in limbo, unable to rebuild their lives or contribute meaningfully to their host communities (UNHCR, 2024). For example, in Lebanon, where over 1 million Syrian refugees reside, many children face significant barriers to accessing education due to overcrowded schools, language differences, and the cost of transportation and school supplies. As a result, thousands remain out of school, increasing their vulnerability to child labor, early marriage, and long-term socio-economic exclusion (Save the Children, 2023). This marginalization can lead to cycles of poverty, exploitation, and further instability, both for the displaced populations and the regions hosting them.

For internally displaced persons, the situation can be even more precarious. Unlike refugees, who benefit from international legal protections under conventions such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, IDPs remain within their own country's borders and therefore lack access to any binding international legal framework specifically designed to protect them. They must rely on their national governments for protection and aid. The same governments that may be unwilling, unable, or themselves responsible for the displacement. In many cases, governments fail to allocate adequate resources, obstruct humanitarian access, or actively persecute displaced populations, particularly when displacement stems from internal conflict, ethnic violence, or political repression (IDMC, 2023). For example, in countries like Syria or the Democratic Republic of Congo, national authorities have been implicated in violence that directly caused displacement, making it unlikely that IDPs will receive protection or support. When the responsibility falls solely on national governments, there is often little accountability or oversight, allowing violations to continue unchecked and leaving IDPs without meaningful recourse or support (Amnesty International, 2023). As a result, IDPs are often among the most vulnerable and neglected of displaced populations.

Political resistance and concerns over national sovereignty also continue to hinder international responses to displacement crises. Many governments justify restrictive migration policies by citing security threats, economic strain, or challenges related to cultural integration. This has led to the closure of borders, the use of pushbacks at sea and land crossings, the detention of asylum seekers, and a rise in xenophobic rhetoric (Human Rights Watch, 2023). For example, in the Mediterranean, some European countries have implemented maritime pushback policies that prevent boats carrying asylum seekers from landing, forcing them to return to unsafe conditions in countries like Libya, where migrants often face detention, abuse, and exploitation (UNHCR, 2023). Such policies not only violate international legal obligations but also endanger the lives and dignity of refugees, denying them access to protection and exacerbating their suffering.

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Lastly, there remains a significant gap in global responsibility-sharing. Displacement crises are inherently international in nature and require coordinated responses. Yet the current system places a disproportionate burden on a few neighboring or frontline states. This imbalance strains the resources and capacities of host countries, often leading to inadequate protection, overcrowded camps, limited access to basic services, and rising tensions within local communities (Global Compact on Refugees, 2018). The United Nations' Global Compact on Refugees, adopted in 2018, was designed to address this imbalance by promoting more equitable responsibility-sharing and durable solutions, including resettlement and development support. However, implementation has been inconsistent, and many pledges made under the Compact have yet to materialize, leaving gaps in protection and assistance for millions of displaced people around the world (UNHCR, 2023).

## Conclusion:

The protection of displaced persons lies at the core of SOCHUM's mission to uphold human dignity and international human rights. Delegates must consider how to balance compassion with capacity, protection with policy, and international obligations with national interests. As millions continue to seek refuge and safety, it is essential that the global community work together to create just, humane, and sustainable solutions (United Nations, 2022).

## Topic B: Questions to Consider

- How can SOCHUM promote stronger enforcement of the 1951 Refugee Convention, especially in non-compliant or non-signatory states?
- What are the limits of national sovereignty when displaced persons face rights violations within a state's borders?
- How can we ensure long-term integration opportunities for refugees—not just short-term aid?
- What legal or humanitarian mechanisms can be developed to support IDPs, who fall outside international refugee law?
- How should the international community differentiate between refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants in a fair and consistent way?

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